

# A CALL TO ACTION



**We are facing a mental health crisis for young people in the U.S., presenting challenges to families, communities, and the mental healthcare system. For decades, we have struggled with an inadequate and fragmented system of services with poor access to care and outcomes—alarming trends worsened by the pandemic.**

## **National Calls to Action on Youth Mental Health**

Government agencies, providers, and advocates have issued calls to action to address the growing mental health challenges facing our young people and their families. The White House, Congress, states, and others continue to add resources and support new investments in mental health services nationwide.

Despite calls to action and substantial investments, the nation lacks a systematic way to guide funding and address the broad issues that range from prevention to treatment that impact young people's mental health. The time has come to bring together the wide range of stakeholders to rethink our approach to mental health for young people and to develop a new strategic vision, which we present in an [accompanying report](#), designed to respond to this crisis.

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Our country faces an unprecedented mental health crisis among people of all ages. Our youth have been particularly impacted as losses from the pandemic... have led to increased social isolation, learning loss, and anxiety.

President Biden, State of the Union Address, 2022

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## Vision for an Improved System

Building on wide-ranging calls to action and our review of current strategies, new investments, and consideration of key questions for all stakeholders, **we have identified 14 critical elements for a re-envisioned mental health system.**

### THE BROAD VISION AND PRINCIPLES

- 1 Use a public health approach focusing on mental health promotion, prevention, early identification and intervention, treatment, and recovery supports.
- 2 Elevate family and youth-driven care.
- 3 Focus on equity.
- 4 Address the Social Determinants of Mental Health.

### HOW THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM WORKS

- 5 Expand the workforce serving children and young people.
- 6 Develop a comprehensive coordinated array of readily accessible services and supports.
- 7 Build on technology as essential infrastructure and a mechanism to improve access and delivery of care.
- 8 Ensure that timely innovations in mental health include a focus on children and young people.

### THE FUNDING AND PAYMENT MODEL

- 9 Implement financing and payment systems to ensure a robust young people-focused benefit design.
- 10 Align federal funding and policies to optimize a mental health system for young people.
- 11 Re-establish an expectation in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Mental Health Block Grant that states submit a plan for children and young people's mental health.

### EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 12 Establish data standards, quality, and accountability in prevention, clinical care, and system performance.
- 13 Encourage a state governance structure for children and young people's mental health.
- 14 Designate a federal coordinator/unified plan for the behavioral health of young people.

MITRE's report, [A Vision for Mental Health Systems of Care for Young People](#) recommends short-term actions and a long-term vision designed to initiate a constructive dialogue for moving forward. We join the calls to reimagine how we serve our young people and build a generation of resilient, healthy young people and adults.

To learn more about MITRE's vision for the youth mental health system or to provide feedback, please contact [youthmentalhealth@imc.mitre.org](mailto:youthmentalhealth@imc.mitre.org).

## The Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES)

Conducted from January to June 2021, among students grades 9-12 attending public and private schools.

The survey found that overall

**37.1%** OF STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY EXPERIENCED POOR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

**31.1%** EXPERIENCED POOR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE 30 DAYS PRECEDING THE SURVEY

In addition, during the 12 months before the survey

**44.2%** OF THE TEENS REPORTED THEY HAD EXPERIENCED PERSISTENT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS

The survey found that almost

**20%** CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE

**9%** ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

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